In The Claims

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (withdrawn from consideration) An endothermic heat shield composition, comprising at least 50 wt/wt% hydrated salt and at least one filler material, wherein said salt is in the form of hydrated salt particles which are fused to each other, wherein said fused state is formed as a result of the heating of the hydrated salt to at least the temperature at which said salt is in liquid form and the subsequent cooling thereof.

2. (withdrawn from consideration) An endothermic heat shield composition according to claim 1, wherein said hydrated salt is selected from the group consisting of $Al_2(SO_4)\cdot 16\text{-}18H_2O$; $NH_4Fe(SO_4)_2\cdot 12H_2O$; $Na_2B_4O_7\cdot 10H_2O$; $NaAl(SO_4)_2\cdot 12H_2O$; $AlNH_4(SO_4)_2\cdot 12\text{-}24H_2O$; $Na_2SO_4\cdot 10H_2O$; $MgSO_4\cdot 7H_2O$; $(NH_4)_2SO_4\cdot 12H_2O$; $KAl(SO_4)_2\cdot 12H_2O$; $Na_2SiO_3\cdot 9H_2O$; $Mg(NO_2)_2\cdot 6H_2O$; $NaNO_2$; $Na_2CO_3\cdot 7H_2O$; and mixtures thereof.

3. (withdrawn from consideration) An endothermic heat shield composition according to claim 2, wherein at least 50% of said ~~hydrated salt is hydrated aluminum sulfate.~~

4. (withdrawn from consideration) An endothermic heat shield

composition according to claim 1, wherein said filler material is a material selected from the group consisting of an organic component and an inorganic component and mixtures thereof.

5. (withdrawn from consideration) An endothermic heat shield composition according to claim 4, wherein said organic component is a solid cellulose-based component.

6. (withdrawn from consideration) An endothermic heat shield composition according to claim 5, wherein said solid cellulose-based component is selected from the group consisting of wood particles and paper particles.

7. (withdrawn from consideration) An endothermic heat shield composition according to claim 5, wherein said solid cellulose-based component is present in an amount ranging from about 5 wt/wt% to 30 wt/wt%.

8. (withdrawn from consideration) An endothermic heat shield composition according to claim 4, wherein said organic includes ~~sugar molasses which is present in an amount of up to 20 wt/wt%.~~

9. (withdrawn from consideration) An endothermic heat shield composition according to claim 4, wherein said inorganic component

is selected from the group consisting of glass fibers and ceramic fibers which is present in an amount of up to 10 wt/wt%.

10. (withdrawn from consideration) An endothermic heat shield composition according to claim 4, wherein said inorganic component is inert, highly porous and light weight.

11. (withdrawn from consideration) An endothermic heat shield composition according to claim 4, wherein said inorganic component is selected from the group consisting of Vermiculite and Perlit and is present in an amount ranging from about 5 wt/wt% to 30 wt/wt%.

12. (withdrawn from consideration) An endothermic heat shield composition according to claim 4, wherein inorganic component is present in an amount of up to 10 wt/wt% and it is selected from the group consisting of titanium dioxide, magnesium oxide, aluminum oxide, and mixtures thereof.

13. (original) A method for preparing an endothermic heat shield composition, which comprises at least 50 wt/wt% hydrated ~~salt and at least one filler material, said method comprising:~~

a) heating the hydrated salt to a temperature at which it liquifies;

b) adding at least one filler material; and

cooling the mixture to form a composition wherein the hydrated salt particles are fused to each other.

14. (original) The method according to claim 13, wherein said hydrated salt is selected from the group consisting of $Al_2(SO_4)\cdot 16\text{-}18H_2O$; $NH_4Fe(SO_4)_2\cdot 12H_2O$; $Na_2B_4O_7\cdot 10H_2O$; $NaAl(SO_4)_2\cdot 12H_2O$; $AlNH_4(SO_4)_2\cdot 12\text{-}24H_2O$; $Na_2SO_4\cdot 10H_2O$; $MgSO_4\cdot 7H_2O$; $(NH_4)_2SO_4\cdot 12H_2O$; $KAl(SO_4)_2\cdot 12H_2O$; $Na_2SiO_3\cdot 9H_2O$; $Mg(NO_2)_2\cdot 6H_2O$; $NaNO_2$; $Na_2CO_3\cdot 7H_2O$; and mixtures thereof.

15. (original) The method according to claim 13, wherein at least 50% of said salt is hydrate aluminum sulfate.

16. (currently amended) The method according to claim 13, wherein said filler material is a ~~material selected from the group consisting of an organic component and an inorganic component and mixtures thereof~~ mixture of organic and inorganic materials.

17. (original) The method according to claim 16, wherein said ~~organic component is a solid cellulose-based component.~~

18. (original) The method according to claim 17, wherein said

solid cellulose-based component is selected from the group consisting of wood particles and paper particles.

19. (original) The method according to claim 17, wherein said solid cellulose-based component is present in an amount ranging from about 5 wt/wt% to 30 wt/wt%.

20. (withdrawn from consideration) A method according to claim 16 wherein said organic component includes sugar molasses which is present in an amount of up to 20 wt/wt%.

21. (original) A method according to claim 16, wherein said inorganic component is selected from the group consisting of glass fibers and ceramic fibers which is present in an amount of up, to 10 wt/wt%.

22. (original) The method according to claim 16, wherein said inorganic component is inert, highly porous and light weight.

23. (withdrawn from consideration) The method according to claim 16, wherein said inorganic component is selected from the group consisting of Vermiculite and Perlit and is present in an amount ranging from about 5 wt/wt% to 30 wt/wt%.

24. (original) The method according to claim 13, further comprising the step of adding up to 10 wt/wt% water to the hydrated salt prior to heating.

25. (withdrawn from consideration) The method according to claim 16, wherein inorganic component is present in an amount of up to 10 wt/wt% and it is selected from the group consisting of titanium dioxide, magnesium oxide, aluminum oxide, and mixtures thereof.